



Federal Bureau of Investigation  
Domestic Terrorism Analysis Unit

**(U) Anarchist Extremism:**  
**An Overview for Law Enforcement**

Publication date: August 2012

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## (U) Introduction: Anarchist Extremism

(U//~~FOUO~~) The majority of anarchists advocate change through non-violence. A minority within the movement continue to encourage criminal actions as a means to effect social, political, and economic change. The FBI uses a broad-based, working definition of an anarchist extremist as one who perceives centralized government and law enforcement as unnecessary and oppressive and is furthering his or her political or social goals (including, but not limited to, anti-authoritarianism, anti-capitalism, anti-gentrification, anti-globalization, anti-law enforcement) wholly or in part through activities involving force or violence and in violation of federal law [REDACTED]

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(U) [REDACTED]

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(U) This report provides information to the law enforcement community on the threat posed by the anarchist extremist movement, which in the past has included acts of violence and property damage. This report is intended to provide both an overview of the current threat posed by the anarchist extremist movement in the United States, and background information on the anarchist extremist movement's history, ideology, and record of criminal activity to place the current threat in perspective.

## (U) National Outlook

(U//~~LES~~) Anarchist extremists, acting alone or in small groups, are often responsible for the majority of property damage and confrontations with law enforcement during major political and economic events. Anarchists typically target what they perceive to be traditional symbols of capitalism, globalization, authoritarianism, imperialism, and perceived exploitation of the environment. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED]

(U//~~LES~~) The overall anarchist extremist movement remains loosely organized nationally. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED]

(U//~~LES~~) The majority of criminal acts associated with anarchist extremism, of which vandalism is most common, usually are in violation of state or local laws. Criminal actions may, however, progress from lower-level criminal activity to more serious crimes that do violate federal laws.

(U//~~LES~~) [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED]

(U) Anarchist Extremist Movement Strengths and Weaknesses

(U//~~LES~~)

[Redacted]

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[Redacted]

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## (U) Ideology and History

(U) Anarchist theory is based on the belief that all forms of hierarchy must be abolished. Anarchists believe political, economic, and social hierarchies based on private ownership of capital, class, religion, race, and gender should not exist. While current law enforcement reporting does not indicate the anarchist extremist movement in the United States has a singular strategic long-term agenda, many variations exist within the movement on how an anarchist system can be achieved and maintained. Notwithstanding these variations, two fundamental beliefs appear constant throughout all streams of anarchist thought: the elimination of capitalism and the current form of the US Government. In the view of anarchists, the abolition of the state and capitalist structures would create a political structure wherein individuals could achieve the highest state of freedom through equality and mutual cooperation.

(U) The word '*anarchy*' comes from the Greek *anarkhia*, meaning 'without a ruler.' In 1840, Pierre-Joseph Proudhon (1809-1865), described himself as an anarchist with reference to his political and social views that organization without government was both possible and desirable. Anarchist theory contends that all forms of government are oppressive and undesirable and should be abolished. Anarchists believe anarchy ultimately makes possible the creation of a society ordered by individual freedom and mutual cooperation and without social, political, or economic hierarchies.

(U) Twentieth century theorists identified a number of schools of thought for what motivates anarchism, with most anarchists unifying around their rejection of the state, external authority, and their opposition to private property, which Proudhon saw as the root of economic inequality.

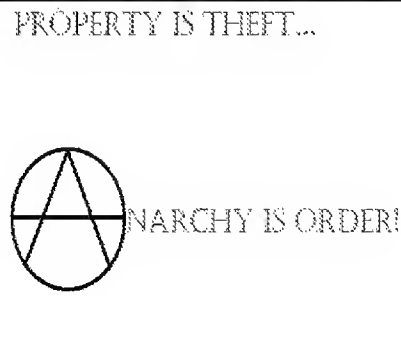
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(U) The circled letter 'A' and a black flag are common symbols associated with anarchism.

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(U) In 1848 Proudhon coined the phrase 'Anarchy is order; government is civil war.'



(U) Proudhon used the term anarchy to define an egalitarian and libertarian ideal in his book *What Is Property?*.

(U) Anarchists believe the earth and its resources are the common inheritance of all, but have been monopolized by a few under the capitalist system, with those who own property exploiting those who do not. Anarchists, therefore, oppose private property because they perceive it to be a source of coercive, hierarchical authority as well as exploitation.

(U) Some contemporary anarchists consider anarchism to be a political movement directed toward the liberation of the working class from economic oppression and to combat racism, sexism, and fascism. Others continue to describe anarchism through more traditional constructs, such as anarcho-capitalism,<sup>a</sup> anarcho-communism,<sup>b</sup> anarcho-feminism,<sup>c</sup> anarcho-primitivism,<sup>d</sup> or anarcho-syndicalism.<sup>e</sup>

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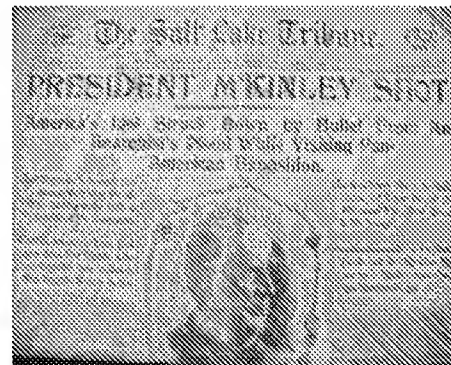
**(U) Additional Colors Commonly Associated with Anarchism**

(U) In addition to **black**, other colors commonly depicted include red, green, or purple coloring. A red and black flag represents revolutionary anarchism incorporating the red of blood spilled during revolution with the black symbolizing anarchy. Red and black are most commonly used by anarcho-syndicalists and anarcho-communists. A green and black coloring is associated with anarcho-primitivists or ecologically-minded anarchists and black and purple is often associated with anarcho-feminists.

**(U) Early Period (Late 18<sup>th</sup> – Early 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries)**

(U) Leon Czolgosz committed the most notable historical act of anarchist extremism in US history when he assassinated President William McKinley in September 1901. As the President was making an appearance in Buffalo, New York, Czolgosz, a self-proclaimed anarchist, approached him and fired two shots from a pistol he purchased two days earlier. President McKinley died eight days later. Czolgosz said, “I killed the President because he was the enemy of the good people,

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<sup>a</sup> (U) Belief in a free-market society in which the market is a self-regulating organization in which individuals cooperate, productively, to their mutual benefits.

<sup>b</sup> (U) Asserts property in land, natural resources, and the means of production should be held in mutual control by local communities.

<sup>c</sup> (U) Advocates the liberation of women from a subordinate social role.

<sup>d</sup> (U) Anarchism with an ecological emphasis that disavows technology in favor of existing in a state of nature.

<sup>e</sup> (U) Emphasizes that organized industrial workers could, through ‘social general strike,’ expropriate the possessors of capital and lead to a workers’ take-over of industry.

the good working people. I am not sorry for my crime.” Czolgosz was tried, found guilty, and executed on 20 October 1901.

(U) Anarchist extremists are also believed responsible for several bombings in the late 1880s and early 1900s.

- (U) **1886 Haymarket Square Riot:** On 1 May 1886, workers in Chicago, Illinois, and around the country walked out of their jobs in support of a resolution for the eight-hour day. The **May Day** events<sup>f</sup> coincided with an on-going strike at McCormick Harvester works. On the evening of 4 May, after a few thousand individuals gathered to protest the killing of two workers by law enforcement the previous day, police broke up a confrontation between striking union members at McCormick Harvester and their replacements. As the crowd was ordered to disperse, a dynamite bomb exploded killing seven policemen and injuring more than 60 others. Eight men described as anarchists were arrested, charged with murder, and convicted.
- (U) **1919 Bombings:** In late April 1919, approximately 30 mail bombs were sent to prominent politicians, including the Attorney General, as well as justice officials and financiers. It is believed the bombs were intended to be delivered on May Day. In June, eight bombs exploded in eight different US cities. It is believed anarchist followers of Italian anarchist Luigi Galleani were responsible for the bombings and attempted bombings.
- (U) **1920 Wall Street Bombing:** On 16 September 1920, a bomb on a horse-drawn cart exploded in New York City, New York, killing more than 30 people and injuring 300. The individuals responsible remain unidentified. The most promising lead was the discovery of four crudely spelled and printed flyers in the area from a group calling itself the “American Anarchist Fighters,” which demanded the release of political prisoners. The letters appeared similar to ones used the previous year in two bombing campaigns attributed to Italian anarchists.

*(U) Modern Extremist Movement (Late 20<sup>th</sup> Century - Present)*

(U//~~FOUO~~) While anarchist-inspired riots and acts of civil unrest have been commonplace in Europe and Latin America throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, the United States has seen a re-emergence of an anarchist criminal problem only during the past two decades as a critical response to corporate globalization. The anti-globalization movement brought together diverse groups, including environmental, social justice, labor, and indigenous rights advocates, against a capitalist economic system it viewed

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<sup>f</sup> (U//~~FOUO~~) Anarchists around the world often gather on **May Day** to commemorate International Workers’ Day. Despite occasional references to the Haymarket Square Riot, gatherings in the United States are usually peaceful. In 2010 and 2012, however, anarchist extremists reportedly caused property damage in several US cities.

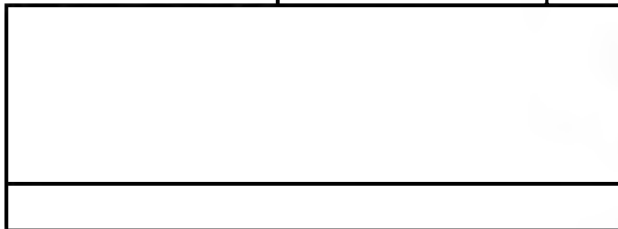


as adversely affecting humans, the environment, and the ecosystem. While multi-national corporations argued society benefited through their promotion of economic growth, opponents argued corporate interests, promoted by a capitalist society, would come at the expense of labor, environmental, and social justice issues.

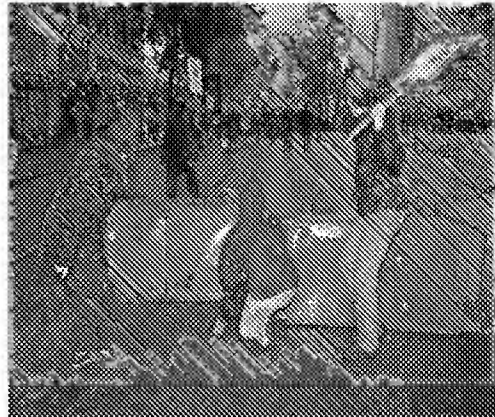
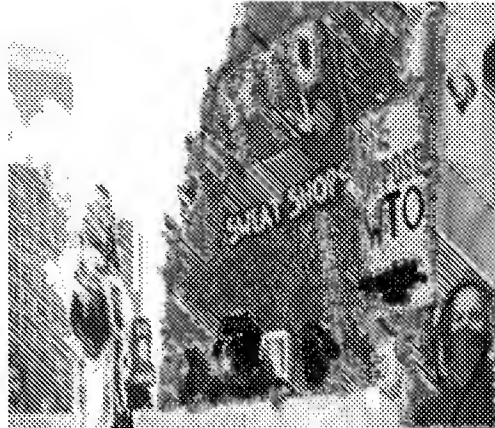
(U//~~FOUO~~) In 1999, opposition to the World Trade Organization (WTO) Ministerial Conference in Seattle, Washington, coalesced a broad range of interest groups opposed to capitalism and the entities that promoted it. In the early morning of 30 November 1999, thousands of protesters began gathering throughout Seattle. Initially, protesters engaged police and delegates in non-violent confrontations. Shortly before noon, a small group of anarchists wearing black masks began turning over newspaper dispensers and garbage containers. The situation degenerated as the rioters began throwing items through store windows, spray painting graffiti on store fronts, and committing other acts of vandalism. By early evening, the Mayor of Seattle declared a state of emergency.

(U) Over the next few days, confrontations resulted in the arrest of more than 600 individuals and reported injuries to more than 50 law enforcement officers. The local media reported businesses sustained an estimated \$3 million in property damage as a result of criminal conduct and retailers reported an estimated \$17 million in lost revenue during the five days of rioting during the WTO Conference.

(U//~~FOUO~~) More than a decade later, the WTO protests remain a defining moment for the modern-day anarchist extremist movement. [REDACTED]



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## (U) Targeting, Tactics, and Criminal Activity

(U//~~FOUO~~) Anarchist extremists generally conduct actions against symbolic rather than indiscriminate targets [REDACTED]

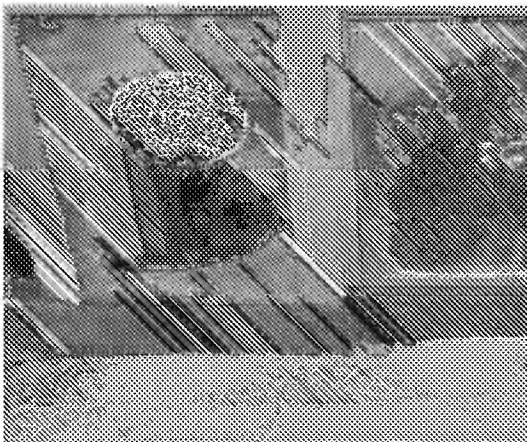
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### (U) Targeting

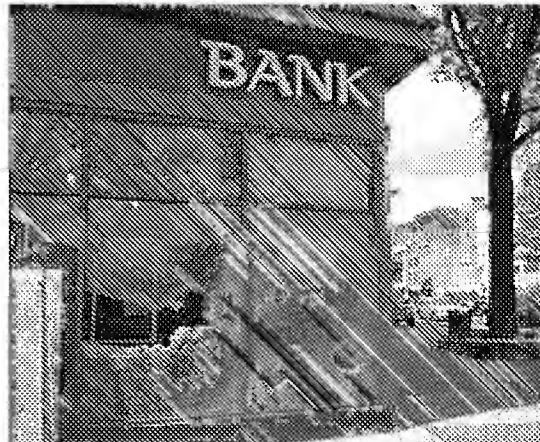
(U//~~LES~~) [REDACTED]

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(U) Left: Business vandalism attributed to anarchist extremists in 1999.



(U) Right: Bank vandalism attributed to anarchist extremists in 2009.

## (U) Symbols of Capitalism Including Multi-National Corporations and Financial Institutions

(U//~~LES~~) Historically, criminal activity associated with the anarchist extremist movement often involved acts of vandalism to properties of global retail, beverage, and fast food corporations due to their perceived environmental practices, exploitation of labor, or sale

of animal products. In recent years, a number of bank vandalisms have been reported by local authorities.

- (U//~~LES~~) Vandalism to financial institutions comprised the majority of the criminal incidents reported to the FBI and attributed to anarchist extremists between January 2008 and December 2011.

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- (U) In November 2011, federal authorities charged a 20-year-old man for the attempted use of Molotov cocktails against a bank in South Jordan, Utah. In April 2012, the man pled guilty to one count of arson.

### **(U) High-Profile Political and Economic Events**

(U//~~LES~~) The majority of criminal activity associated with the anarchist extremist movement continues to occur during mass-mobilizations as extremists attempt to disrupt major political and economic events. The criminal activity often violates state or local laws and can threaten public safety and result in significant financial losses.

- (U) In 2008 federal authorities arrested three anarchist extremists for illegal possession of and intending to use manufactured Molotov cocktails to disrupt the Republican National Convention (RNC) in St. Paul, Minnesota.

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## (U) Government, Military, and Law Enforcement Property

(U//~~LES~~) Anarchists oppose all forms of governmental organization and control and view the government, military, and law enforcement as symbols of imperialism and oppression. Local authorities have reported anarchist extremist graffiti and property damage to police property in several cities, including Lexington, Kentucky; Portland, Oregon; and Seattle, Washington, since 2008.

- (U) In 2008 an individual associated with an anarchist group pled guilty to damaging government property in connection with the 2005 vandalism of a US Army Recruiting Station in Spokane, Washington. He was sentenced to three years federal probation and ordered to pay over \$4,000 in restitution.

## (U) Entities Perceived as Exploitative or Destructive to the Environment

(U//~~LES~~) Some anarchists adhere to an ideology concerned for the environment and the protection of animals. Eco-anarchists or green anarchists desire to implement policies to protect animals and the environment by eliminating perceived government and multi-national corporate exploitation and destruction of the environment. Green anarchist extremists contend capitalists' pursuit of profit and expansion is detrimental to society and contributes to the destruction of the environment. Green anarchist extremists believe criminal actions are necessary and justified and may perceive a target as being both a symbol of capitalism and an agent of environmental harm. Criminal actions committed by green anarchist extremists may be attributed to the Earth Liberation Front (ELF), or possibly the Animal Liberation Front (ALF), to provide wider recognition and attribution.

- (U//~~FOUO~~) In 2006 federal authorities disrupted an extremist cell which had discussed targeting [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED] Two of the individuals pled guilty to conspiracy charges and the third, considered by law enforcement authorities to be a green anarchist extremist, was found guilty in federal court and received a sentence of nearly 20 years in prison.
- (U//~~LES~~) In 2005 federal authorities arrested four individuals for a series of arson-related incidents in northern California [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

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### (U) Historical Examples

(U//~~LES~~) In 2001 three anarchist extremists pled guilty to federal arson charges [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

(U//~~LES~~) In 2000 two Eugene, Oregon, anarchists were arrested for the arson of [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

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[REDACTED]

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### (U) Tactics and Criminal Activity

(U//~~LES~~)

[REDACTED]

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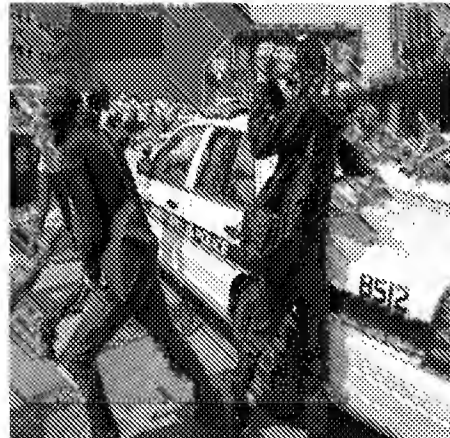
[REDACTED]

### (U) Illegal Disruption of Major Events

(U//~~LES~~) Anarchist extremists perpetrated violent and destructive acts in Seattle during the WTO meetings in 1999 [REDACTED]

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(U) Criminal activity during the 2008 RNC.

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[REDACTED]

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[REDACTED]

<sup>g</sup> (U) See Appendix A for a list of potential Federal Statutes that may apply.

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(U//~~LES~~) Overview of Possible Anarchist Extremist Actions  
before, during, and after a Major Event

(U//~~LES~~) [Redacted]  
[Redacted]

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(U//~~FOUO~~) [Redacted]  
[Redacted]

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(U//~~FOUO~~) [Redacted]  
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(U//~~LES~~) [Redacted]  
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(U//~~LES~~) [Redacted]  
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(U//~~LES~~) [Redacted]  
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(U//~~LES~~) [Redacted]  
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(U) **Property Destruction:**

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(U//~~LES~~) Anarchist extremists will often target property. Extremists do not view property destruction as a violent or illegal action when perpetrated against public property, business establishments, government facilities, or law enforcement entities.

[REDACTED]

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[REDACTED]

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(U//~~LES~~)

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

- (U//~~FOUO~~) In December 2010, a smoke bomb was inserted through the mail slot of a business frequented by law enforcement in Portland, Oregon. The device, a consumer-grade pyrotechnic, burned a mat and carpet but did not ignite a larger fire. Several anarchist Web sites published the same identical message claiming responsibility for the incident.
- (U//~~FOUO~~) In 2009 local authorities in Sault Saint Marie, Michigan, arrested two members of an anarchist group in possession of homemade explosives and incendiary devices. Both pled guilty to state felony charges of attempted possession or possession of a Molotov cocktail. At the time of their arrests, this group, while claiming anarchist affiliation, did not have identified targeting or goals.
- (U//~~FOUO~~) In 2006 an explosion at an apartment complex in Texas City, Texas, killed one person and injured another. The two individuals had been manufacturing and experimenting with Tri-Acetone Tri-Peroxide (TATP) for several months prior to the accidental

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detonation. A search of the apartment revealed explosive precursors and approximately five pounds of TATP. The survivor pled guilty to federal charges of aiding and abetting the manufacture of explosives. Investigation determined the two had anarchist or anti-government leanings but had not established any plans, group ideology, or goals.

- (U//~~LES~~) [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

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(U//~~LES~~) [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

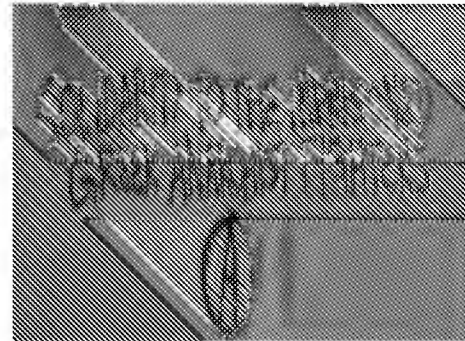
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(U//~~LES~~) [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

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(U//~~FOUO~~) Historically, anarchist extremists in the United States have committed acts of vandalism [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

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(U) Vandalism reported in Olympia, Washington, in 2011.

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**(U) Landmark Anarchist Extremism Conviction**

(U//~~LES~~) In 2003 an anarchist extremist was the first person prosecuted under Title 18 USC § 842(p), Illegal Distribution of Information Relating to the Making and Use of Explosives in Furtherance of a Federal Crime of Violence. In 2001 the extremist began to post threats against both domestic and international capitalist events and provided instructions detailing the illegal production and use of IEDs.



(U) Vandalism

(U//~~LES~~) Acts of vandalism account for the majority of reported criminal incidents attributed to the anarchist extremist movement nationally. During 2011 criminal activity by anarchist extremists primarily involved localized acts of vandalism [REDACTED]

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- (U//~~LES~~) In 2010 and 2011, acts of vandalism, including anarchist graffiti and destruction of property, were reported in the District of Columbia, California, Colorado, North Carolina, Oregon, Pennsylvania, and Washington.

(U//~~LES~~) Common types of incidents include spray-painted graffiti, broken windows, super-glued locks, and damage to vehicles and construction equipment. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] Acts of vandalism, which need not require many resources to commit, can be disruptive and cause economic damage and financial losses. Such crimes usually violate state or local laws, and, depending on the circumstances, federal law.

(U) Sabotage

(U//~~LES~~) [REDACTED]

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- (U//~~LES~~) [REDACTED]
- (U//~~LES~~) In 2004 a self-avowed anarchist pled guilty to sabotaging high voltage power lines in Oregon and California [REDACTED]

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**(U) Confrontations and Assaults**

(U//~~LES~~) Law enforcement officers have sustained injuries in confrontations with anarchist extremists at numerous events since the WTO in Seattle. [REDACTED]

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- (U) Prior to the 2008 RNC, local law enforcement authorities recovered a number of items while executing search warrants including six throwing-style knives, a machete, a hatchet, smoke bombs, fireworks, buckets of nails, bolt cutters, gas masks, caltrops<sup>h</sup>, rocks, bricks, and steel pipes.

(U//~~LES~~) Law enforcement officers have also been injured as physical confrontations escalated between anti-racist anarchist extremists and white supremacists at white supremacist-sanctioned gatherings. Several incidents have been reported since 2005.

### (U) Use of the Internet

(U//~~LES~~) Anarchist extremists use computers, the Internet, and wireless communication devices to disseminate their ideology, to plan, organize, and coordinate mass-mobilization efforts involving criminal activity, and to publicize claims of responsibility.

- (U//~~LES~~) Internet postings and news articles publicized anarchist preparations against the 2008 RNC in St. Paul, Minnesota, in the months prior to the event.

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(U//~~LES~~) In 1999, as rioters disrupted the WTO meetings, others initiated a distributed denial of service (DDOS)<sup>i</sup> attack—that they considered to be an act of electronic civil disobedience—against the WTO official Web site.

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<sup>h</sup> (U)

<sup>i</sup> (U) The coordinated targeting of a computer or network connection by multiple computers or networks to prevent legitimate users from accessing information or services.

<sup>j</sup> (U)

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(U) Less Common Tactics, Incidents

(U) Threat or Hoax Threat Letters

(U//~~LES~~) In a few instances, anarchist extremists are suspected of sending threatening or hoax threatening communications. In each incident the threat was attributed to a previously unknown group [REDACTED]

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- (U) In 2011 residents in a specific neighborhood of Grand Rapids, Michigan, received threatening letters in which self-described "anti-gentrification militants" claimed responsibility for an arson of a condominium structure under construction and threatened further violence if the tenants and homeowners did not move.
- (U//~~LES~~) In 2006 threatening videotapes, some accompanied with threatening letters, attributed to the "Terrorist Militia" (TM) were mailed or hand delivered to more than a dozen individuals or businesses in seven states. [REDACTED]

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(U//~~LES~~) To date, no further acts of violence or threats using these monikers have occurred.

(U) [REDACTED]

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(U//~~LES~~) [REDACTED]

- (U//~~LES~~) In 2006 a 59-year-old man described as an antigovernment survivalist was sentenced to 87 months in prison for various violations. [REDACTED]

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- (U//~~LES~~) In 2002 a former computer systems administrator with anarchist leanings was arrested in a tunnel under the University of Illinois at Chicago. [REDACTED]

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## (U) Summary and Recommendations

(U//~~LES~~) It is anticipated anarchist extremists, acting alone or in small groups, will continue to be responsible for criminal activity targeting what they perceive to be traditional symbols of capitalism, globalization, authoritarianism, imperialism, and perceived exploitation of the environment. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED]

(U//~~LES~~) [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

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(U//~~LES~~) Violations of state or local laws will likely continue to constitute the majority of anarchist criminal activity, with vandalism being most common. Acts of vandalism are generally easy to commit, can cause economic damage, and—even though extremists may not always claim or publicize their actions in an effort to avoid law enforcement scrutiny—can garner publicity that attracts sympathizers.

(U//~~LES~~) [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED]

(U//~~LES~~) [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED]

(U//~~LES~~) [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED]

## **(U) Appendix A: Federal Statutes**

(U) The US Government has successfully charged anarchist extremists under a number of statutes including:

- Title 18 USC § 842: Unlawful acts regarding importation, manufacture, distribution, and storage of explosive materials
- Title 18 USC § 844: Conspiring to maliciously damage or destroy, or attempt, by means of fire real or personal property used in interstate or foreign commerce
- Title 18 USC § 1361: Depredation of government property
- Title 18 USC § 1366: Damaging or attempting to damage an energy facility
- Title 26 USC § 5861: Possession of an unregistered firearm or destructive device

(U) Additional statutes that may apply during illegal disruptions of major events include:

- Title 18 USC § 231: Civil disorders
- Title 18 USC § 372: Conspiracy to impede or injure officer
- Title 18 USC § 1951: Interference with commerce by threats or violence
- Title 18 USC § 2101: Travels or uses of any facility of interstate commerce to incite a riot, or to organize, promote, encourage, participate in or commit any act of violence in furtherance of a riot, or to aid and abet

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(U) In addition to FBI information, this primer derived facts and information from the following open sources:

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